The amended Act has since been notified. Consequently, DRT rules have also been modified which would be notified soon. Further measures to streamline the functioning of DRTs would be considered as and when the need arises.

(d) The following steps have been taken for speedy disposal of cases by DRTs:—

i) Constitution of 15 more DRTs since 1st April, 2000 thereby taking the total number of DRTs in the country to 29;

ii) Increasing the staff strength of DRTs;

iii) Further delegation of administrative and financial powers to Presiding Officers to improve their functioning;

iv) Arranging adequate infrastructure for DRTs;

v) Close coordination between DRTs and Banks/FIs; and

vi) Office computerization in DRTs.

Phasing out of Haj subsidies

*293. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal for phasing out subsidies and Government support to Haj pilgrims;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of the subsidies, support and concessions granted to pilgrims to different shrines and places of religious importance?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) and (b) Proposals have been received both for phasing out and maintaining Government subsidy on Haj pilgrimage. No final view has been taken on this issue.

(c) For Haj pilgrimage, Government makes arrangements for their air travel from India to Saudi Arabia for which pilgrims are charged Haj fare at a subsidised rate. For Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, Government partially defrays the expenditure incurred by Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam on the boarding and lodging for the pilgrims. For these pilgrimages, Government

also makes other administrative arrangements like medical facilities, security etc. For pilgrimage to other religious places in various States, the respective State Governments make administrative arrangements.

Alternative fuel for petroleum and diesel

*296. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether research at national and international level is being conducted to evolve alternative fuel in place of petroleum;

(b) if so, the success achieved in this regard so far;

(c) whether efforts are being made to find a suitable, efficient and clean alternative fuel in place of diesel also; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Research is being conducted at national and international levels for evolving and harnessing alternate fuel/energy sources, such as bio-diesel, fuel cells, hydrogen, coal bed methane, gas hydrates, non-conventional energy sources like solar, wind, small hydro and biomass. Ethanol blend in petrol (gasohol) and in diesel is also in use in some countries.

In India, supply of gasohol with 5% ethanol, is being mandated in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh and Union Territories of Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Pondicherry from 1st January 2003. For 10% ethanol blending in petrol, 5% ethanol blended diesel and of bio-diesel blend in diesel, research and development work is at an advanced stage of progress. Pilot projects are being planned on 10% ethanol blend in petrol and on 5% bio-diesel in diesel.

Use of natural and Compressed Natural Gas and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as a clean alternate fuel in place of diesel has been advocated, depending upon the availability of gas and necessary infrastructure. Coal Bed Methane (CBM) is another source of fuel on which exploitation efforts are on to augment natural gas availability.